



Subject:	Response received from Department for Infrastructure re Lagan Valley Regional Park Funding
Date:	7th November, 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Sara Steele, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 8th August, it agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure to express its concern at the withdrawal of funding for Lagan Valley Regional Park for the financial year 2023-24.
3.2	The Committee is advised that a response was received from Ms. Violeta Morrison, PPTO, Rivers Directorate.
3.3	In her response, she advised that the Department was fully appreciative of the close working relationship that had existed between the Department and Lagan Valley Regional Park. The Department understood that the withdrawal of the discretionary funding of £42k from Lagan Valley Regional Park had left the Park in a precarious situation, however, the decision to cut all discretionary spending and, therefore the funding to LVRP, had been taken at Departmental level due to overall budget cuts that had affected all Departments. Therefore, the Department's Inland Waterways team would not be able to enter into a new Operational Service Agreement (OSA) with LVRP.
3.4	She referred to the lack of notice given to LVRP in relation to the withdrawal of funding, noting that the Inland Waterways team had communicated the uncertainty around funding to LVRP as early as March 2023, with further similar communications issued in June and July 2023. Despite this, LVRP continued to carry out their functions under the previous OSA, which expired in March 2023, for which, the Department was very grateful. However, due to the current financial situation, the Department could not compensate LVRP for the works undertaken. The Department's resource budget was only confirmed in early July and LVRP were excluded. Soon after that, the Department notified LVRP in writing that funding was not available for this financial year and that a new OSA would not be commenced.
3.5	She went onto detail that, the health and safety of those using the towpath remained the Department's highest priority. Therefore, the Department would continue to carry out its maintenance function along the full length of the Lagan Towpath, including the part previously

	<p>looked after by the LVRP. Inland Waterways staff had been dealing with any enquiries and complaints regarding the Towpath. Regrettably, the Department had reached the stage where it had to prioritise its limited capacity on delivering the functions it was required to deliver by law.</p>
3.6	<p>Although the Department was not able to fund the full £42k previously provided to LVRP, the Department's Inland Waterways team had proposed an affordable reduced level of service at minimal cost, to cover litter collection and handling of enquiries by LVRP. The Department would be happy to explore this new option, and this had been communicated to LVRP on several occasions and most recently, at a meeting on 21st September, 2023.</p>
3.7	<p>The correspondence concluded by stating that unfortunately, the Department was not able to revisit the decision to withdraw the £42k discretionary funding for LVRP during this financial year, as it was faced with a considerable resource funding shortfall across all of its functions.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Response from Department for Infrastructure